

**CONGRESSMAN SHERWOOD BOEHLERT (R-NY)**  
**SPEECH TO ENERGY IN THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY SYMPOSIUM**  
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Let me start by thanking all of you for letting me be a part of this conference. Far too many meetings I attend in Washington on energy policy involve me sitting impatiently as people tell me what we can't do: We can't make progress on alternative energy. We can't rely on alternative energy. We can't talk about global climate change. And on and on.

But here in upstate New York, you're having a conference to learn what we all can do: to learn about the growing potential of renewable energy, and about how we can make economic and environmental progress in tandem.

I was, I guess the word is "energized," just by looking at your agenda. And it's so easy to get excited about the potential of renewable energy up here because we are surrounded by impressive advances, whether it's the wind farms in Madison County, or the research work of the Forestry School in Syracuse, or the fuel cell work of Plug Power in Albany, to name just a few.

We need more symposiums like this all around the country to help people plan creatively for the future. So you have my thanks for coming here and for being willing to think in a positive vein.

But I have to say that while being here makes me feel more upbeat, it can also makes me feel a little superfluous. You've spent your morning hearing from a wide range of experts who know the ins and outs of renewable energy technologies better than I ever hope to.

But then, we all recognize that for those technologies to truly take off, we're going to need the right policy environment, so I guess I do have a role to play. With that in mind, my goal this afternoon is not to overwhelm you with statistics over lunch, but rather to talk in a general way about the nature and state of the policy debate.

I should note that this is a perfect time to do so: the House next week will be taking up a comprehensive – and controversial – Energy Bill, H.R. 6. So energy is about to be on the "front burner" once again in Washington.

Indeed, part of my day yesterday was spent working with the Speaker to pull together the Energy Bill, which draws on measures approved by quite a few Committees, including the Science Committee, which I am privileged to chair.

Our part of the bill deals, of course, with research and development programs. That includes programs that fund the long-term, fundamental research done at the nation's National Laboratories and universities, like those in upstate New York. It also includes more applied programs that try to develop new technologies for energy efficiency and renewable energy, as well as new technologies to improve our ability to tap fossil fuels and nuclear energy.

The Science Committee's provisions deal directly with the issues you've discussed today. Our bill would pump more money into research on solar energy, wind energy, biomass and fuel cells, for example.

But we go further than that, we want to get what's discovered out into the marketplace. So we also authorize the establishment of a new grant program under which the States would distribute funds to help private entities install solar energy. We

authorize the creation of a new test facility to try out wind turbines. We authorize grants to help defray the costs of building biorefineries to test and demonstrate new technologies. And we fund demonstrations of fuel cells in public transit.

The goal of all these programs is to make sure that new technologies will work out in the real world, to reduce their costs, and to show that they work so that they can succeed in the marketplace.

We are behind our international competitors in many of these technologies. That not only means we're using more fossil fuels than we have to, it not only means that we're creating more pollution than we have to, it also means we're losing a chance to create industries that could sell products overseas. We could be making money off of renewable technologies – doing well by doing good, as the old adage has it.

Now the programs I mentioned won't come to pass unless the overall Energy Bill is passed. And the track record is not good. As you may know, this will be the third Congress in a row to try to pass an Energy Bill, an effort that was inaugurated with the Vice President's May 2001 energy report.

Each time, the Congressional effort has been stymied both by differences over the broad, overarching thrust of energy policy, and by disputes over narrower particulars.

Last year, the issue that finally sunk the bill was a fight over whether companies that make the gasoline additive MTBE could be sued for the pollution caused by their product.

It's too early to know whether the same arguments will gum up the works this time around. The Senate has barely started writing its version of the Energy Bill this time around.

But I think it's vital that we keep up our efforts to pass a bill. The nation desperately needs an energy policy. Why? Well, there are a lot of reasons; this morning, you've focused on the environmental, and perhaps some of the economic reasons why a more enlightened energy policy would advance our national interests.

But there's a reason we need an energy policy that trumps all other concerns – and that's national security. Our dependence on foreign oil is, quite simply, the greatest underlying threat to our national security.

For starters, it puts the routines of our daily lives at the mercy of unstable foreign regimes. Political upheaval or hostility toward the U.S. in the Middle East, or Africa or Venezuela could utterly disrupt our personal lives.

But it's worse than that. Our dependence on foreign oil actually helps terrorists in at least two ways. First, it gives them more targets to attack. Want to cripple the U.S.? You don't have to fly planes into New York City skyscrapers, you could just take the presumably easier step of blowing up some Middle Eastern oil fields.

Second, our oil payments also help fund the terrorists as some oil money flows to terrorist groups. As Frank Gaffney, a Reagan Pentagon official has said of the terrorists, "We are paying them to kill us."

And our oil dependence also weakens our economy by bloating the trade deficit and by taking dollars that could be spent at domestic enterprises and sending them overseas.

It's scary, especially when you realize that we import far more of our oil now than we did during the energy crises of the 1970s. And we're not going to be able to drill our way out of the problem.

The experts tell us that no matter what the U.S. does, including opening the Alaskan National Wildlife Refuge, or ANWR – a move I oppose – even if we open ANWR and other new areas, U.S. oil production will never return to the peak levels of the 1970s. So we're in a bind.

And let me add that the situation for natural gas is almost equally disturbing. Supplies are limited, prices spike and any natural gas used for energy production is unavailable for other important uses, such as the manufacture of chemicals and fertilizers. More and more, folks outside of government are starting to recognize the dire situation we face. Promisingly, that's starting to bring together some pretty strange bedfellows.

The new Energy Future Coalition, for example, brings together such unlikely comrades in arms as Reagan national security officials and the Natural Resources Defense Council. (Up until now, all they've had in common is the use of the word "defense.")

The privately funded National Commission on Energy Policy, which released recommendations late last year, was co-chaired by Bill Reilly, the first President Bush's head of the Environmental Protection Agency, and John Holdren, a leading liberal academic energy expert from Harvard who advised the Clinton Administration. And the Commission included a variety of energy companies. The Alliance to Save Energy, a non-governmental organization that includes on its board some of the most conservative Members of Congress, has just released a wide-ranging energy proposal.

In a city as polarized as contemporary Washington, the mere existence of these efforts should be front-page news, and should be taken as a sign of the depth of the problem we face.

What all these groups have in common is a desire to get beyond ideological posturing to come up with broad, balanced and innovative ways to wean ourselves from foreign oil.

We're never going to be self-sufficient, but we don't need to let our reliance on foreign oil to grow at the current alarming pace.

What's a balanced approach? It means enhancing conservation while at the same time increasing our energy supply across the board – coal, oil, natural gas, nuclear, hydro, solar, wind, geothermal and more – in an environmentally responsible way.

And to achieve that, we need to invest more in energy R&D, we need incentives to bring the fruits of that research and development to the marketplace, and we need regulatory and tax policies that will promote the right energy choices.

Which brings me back to the Energy Bill the House will be debating next week. The language of the bill as it will come before the House wasn't yet complete as of last night, but the outlines of the bill are well known.

And unfortunately, that bill does not reflect the open-mindedness of the bipartisan groups I've mentioned. It's too weighted toward increasing supplies of traditional energy sources and toward protecting entrenched interests.

Outside of the Science Committee sections, the bill in no way represents an effort to push the U.S. energy profile in new directions through strong government leadership. The U.S. national security would be just as threatened after the enactment of this bill as it is today.

I've opposed the past versions of the Energy Bill, and I plan to oppose this one as well unless it is amended substantially.

What kinds of opportunities does this bill fail to capitalize on?

Well, let me focus on just one missed opportunity that I find especially disturbing: the bill does virtually nothing to increase the fuel economy of vehicles in the near term. Here's how important that is. Fully 60 percent of the oil this nation consumes every single day is used for transportation. Six out of every ten gallons of oil used by the U.S. ends up in the fuel tanks of our cars, trucks and other vehicles.

So if we want to reduce our dependence on foreign oil, the transportation sector is a good place to look. And it's an especially good target because the transportation sector is one of the few parts of our economy that has gotten less fuel efficient in the past 30 years.

Industry uses less oil today than it did in the 1970s to produce the same number of goods. But we use more oil than we did in the 1970s to drive the same number of miles.

So what could we do about it? Well, I'm planning to offer an amendment to the Energy Bill next week that would increase the Corporate Average Fuel Economy, or CAFE standard, for cars and light trucks to 33 miles per gallon by 2015. Currently, the vehicles on the road average 25 miles per gallon – a number that's actually dropped over time.

CAFE standards set the mileage each automaker's vehicles, on average, have to achieve, and the standards haven't been raised appreciably for more than a decade.

What would the 33 per mile per gallon standard mean for the nation? It would mean that the U.S. would consume 10 percent less oil in 2015 – 10 percent less – than we would without that new standard. That's a significant savings.

Now the opponents of higher standards like to argue – “pretend” would be a better word – that tightening CAFE standards might be good for the nation as a whole but it would be bad for individual consumers.

Thankfully, we have a study the prestigious National Academy of Science released in 2002 that proves that this is just hogwash.

For example, opponents of better fuel economy often like to scare people by claiming that cars with better mileage would be less safe. But the National Academy of Sciences found that cars with better mileage could actually be designed to be safer than the cars and light trucks that are on the road today.

And at a hearing I chaired in February, even our witness representing the automakers acknowledged that there was no reason that better mileage had to result in reduced safety.

Opponents of CAFE standards also argue that the rules will hurt consumers by costing them money or limiting their choices. Both these claims are false. The National Academy found that consumers would make back in lower expenditures for gas any increases in the purchasing price of a car.

And CAFE standards would actually give consumers choices they don't have now. For example, I drive an SUV. I'd like to drive one that gets decent mileage but none was on the market when I bought my car. But that would likely change with tighter fuel economy standards. And my choices probably wouldn't increase much if at all in the absence of CAFE standards because I have no way of expressing my preference for a high-mileage SUV in the marketplace.

And let me dispense with one final argument that you might hear against increasing fuel economy. And that's that we just don't know how to achieve it. The

National Academy put that notion to rest. The Academy report listed 17 technologies that already exist that can increase fuel economy – and that didn't even include the hybrid technology that is now starting to gain a noticeable share of the market.

Now I know that fuel economy wasn't a focus of today's conference but I thought it was worth going into some depth on the fuel economy issue for a few reasons.

First, as I noted, reducing the amount of gas our cars use per mile has to be part of any balanced energy policy – and any climate change policy, for that matter.

Second, as we're talking about the long-term advances we may be able to make in the transportation sector – with technologies like fuel cells – it's essential to remember that we don't have to wait for those technologies to start making progress.

But beyond all that, the kinds of false arguments that I have to counter in arguing for CAFE standards are often raised about alternative energy and energy conservation.

You'll hear that we can't move ahead with renewable energy because we don't have the technology, or because it costs too much, or because it forces bad choices on consumers, or because it will make us less comfortable, and so forth. And these arguments are just as faulty when applied to renewables and conservation.

The only cure for this nonsense is to spread accurate information from credible sources. One way to do that, collectively, is through federal and state programs that can demonstrate the viability of new technologies – whether those programs are demonstration grants or tax credits or some other approach.

But we also have to act individually. I hope everyone here will do your own part by doing everything possible to spread the information you've picked up at today's conference.

The writer Kurt Vonnegut once defined the "information revolution" as the idea that people could actually know what they were talking about if they really wanted to. That's an "information revolution" from which we could all benefit.

We won't get more renewable energy unless we first renew our own energies and devote them to spreading the word about what is possible.

As all the bipartisan studies I mentioned earlier have pointed out, we could be on the verge of a new era in which we race forward with new technologies to produce and save energy.

But instead we seem on the verge of a crisis in which our energy consumption could threaten our security, our economy and our environment. That would be a tragedy – and an utterly avoidable one.

I want to work with all of you to help in any way I can to move us toward that new era both here in upstate New York and nationally.

If we all work at it, in both our private choices and our public lives, we can tap into new means of energy production and conservation, and our communities and our nation will be better for it.

I see this conference as one small, but important step in doing that. Thank you for inviting me.